

REMARKS

Claims 1-10 and 28 are pending. In the Office Action dated January 19, 2007, the Examiner took the following action: (1) rejected claims 1 and 28 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as failing to distinctly claim the subject matter; (2) rejected claim 28 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement; (3) rejected claims 1-6 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 3,468,096 to Franz ("Franz"); (4) rejected claims 1-6, 10 and 28 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over U.S. Patent No. 3,451,758 to McClain ("McClain"); (5) rejected claims 1-6 and 28 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over U.S. Patent No. 3,175,331 to Klein ("Klein"); (6) rejected claims 1, 4, 7 and 28 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over U.S. Patent No. 5,282,900 to McDonell et al. ("McDonell"); (7) rejected claims 1-3 and 28 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over U.S. Patent No. 6,171,007 to Hsu et al. ("Hsu"); (8) rejected claims 1 and 28 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over U.S. Patent No. 4,050,825 to Stein ("Stein"); and (9) rejected claim 8 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over McClain.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 1 and 28 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Applicants respectfully assert that the term "substantially" is commonly used claim language and has been interpreted by the courts as being definite.

Claims 28 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement. Applicants respectfully assert that claim 28 is supported by the specification as filed. Figure 1 of the originally filed application shows a soap material (12) having a scrubbing element (14) embedded therein. It is apparent from the figure that the soap material extends beyond the scrubbing element embedded therein. Claim 28 is therefore adequately supported by the specification as filed.

Discussion of the Disclosed Embodiment

The embodiments disclosed in the present application will now be discussed in comparison to the cited references. Of course, the discussion of the disclosed embodiments, and the discussion of the differences between the disclosed embodiments and the cited references, does not define the scope or interpretation of any of the claims. Instead, such discussed differences merely help the Examiner appreciate important claim distinctions discussed thereafter.

The present application is generally directed toward a soap bar having a scrubbing element. According to one embodiment of the invention, the scrubbing soap bar includes a scrubbing element having a filamentous network with internal void regions. The scrubbing element may be formed from essentially the filamentous network that advantageously permits the scrubbing soap bar to cleanse objects having recesses and

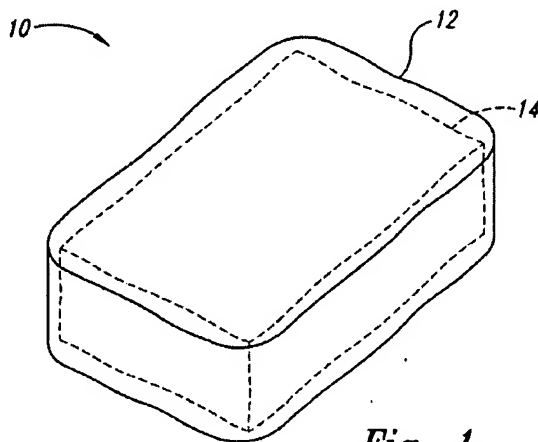


Fig. 1

crevices. Thus, the scrubbing element does not need additional abrasive particles disposed thereon to effectively function as an abrasive medium. The disclosed scrubbing element is substantially surrounded by and encased in a continuous layer of a rigid soap material that extends around the outermost boundary of the scrubbing element. As shown in Figure 1, the outermost boundary of the soap material (12) is outside of and separated from the outermost boundary of the scrubbing element (14) to form a substantially continuous layer of soap material. The soap material also at least partially fills the internal void regions of the scrubbing element. The soap bar may be formed by pouring a semi-liquid stream of soap material into a mold. The soap bar is formed when the semi-liquid stream of soap material solidifies into a solid soap material.

Discussion of the Cited References

The cited references are different from the disclosed embodiment and contain no teaching or suggestion to combine in order to achieve the claimed invention. Each of the cited

references teach fibrous material surrounding cakes of soap. None of the cited references teach a soap material surrounding the outermost boundary of a scrubbing element. Fig. 1.

The Franz patent shows a scouring pad (17) having a washing compound (18) interposed *between* superposed layers of non-woven fibrous material. Fig. 3; Col. 2, lns. 32-40. The McClain patent also similarly discloses superposed fibrous layers (10 and 11) with a detergent cake (12) therebetween. Fig. 2.

The Klein patent discloses a cleaning pad that may be formed from a single ply of batt 13 containing randomly-arranged fibers 6. The batt 13 is dipped into a solution or paste of washing composition and thereafter dried so that the dried washing composition is incorporated into the interstices of the batt 13. Col. 7, lns. 25-32. There is no indication that the solid washing composition soap material surrounds and is separated from the outermost boundary of the batt 13.

The McDonnell patent discloses a surface treating article that is formed from a nonwoven fibrous web coated with a binder formulation containing abrasive particles. Col. 6, lns. 14-16. Surfactants may be added to the binder formulation. Table 2. McConnell teaches only coating the fibers of the fibrous web, it does not teach soap material surrounding and separated from the outermost boundary of a scrubbing element.

Neither McDonnell nor Klein disclose a continuous soap layer surrounding the outermost boundary of a scrubbing element. As noted above, each only coat individual fibers, as such the coatings on the fiber do not form a continuous layer surrounding the outermost boundary of the fibers.

Discussion of the Claims

Turning now to the claims, the patentably distinct differences between the cited references and the claim language will be specifically pointed out. With respect to claim 1, none of the cited references, whether alone or in combination, teach or suggest all of the limitations of the claim including “a scrubbing element having a filamentous network with internal void regions, the scrubbing element having an outermost scrubbing element boundary; and a layer of rigid soap material surrounding the scrubbing element and at least partially filling the void regions of the scrubbing element, the rigid soap material having an outermost soap material boundary; wherein the outermost scrubbing element boundary is located completely within the

outermost soap material boundary and wherein the outermost scrubbing element boundary is distanced from the outermost soap material boundary to create a substantially continuous outer soap layer between the outermost scrubbing element boundary and the outermost soap material boundary." (emphasis added).

Claims 2 – 10 are dependent on allowable claim 1 and are therefore allowable.

With respect to claim 28, none of the cited references, whether alone or in combination, teach or suggest all of the limitations of the claim, including "a scrubbing element consisting essentially of a filamentous network with internal void regions, the scrubbing element having an outermost scrubbing element boundary; and a rigid soap material that surrounds the scrubbing element and at least partially fills the void regions, the rigid soap material having an outermost soap material boundary; wherein the outermost scrubbing element boundary is located completely within the outermost soap material boundary and wherein the outermost scrubbing element boundary is distanced from the outermost soap material boundary." (emphasis added).

All of the claims remaining in the application are clearly allowable. Favorable consideration and a timely Notice of Allowance are earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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